

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE

Cora Campbell, Commissioner
Jeff Regnart, Director



Contact:
Thomas Sheridan, Seine Area Management Biologist
Jeremy Botz, Gillnet Area Management Biologist
Amanda Wiese, Assistant Area Management Biologist
Phone: (907) 424-3212 Fax: (907) 424-3235

Prince William Sound Area Office
401 Railroad Avenue, PO Box 669
Cordova, AK 99574-0669

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Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #34

BERING RIVER DISTRICT: The Bering River District will open at 7:00 am on Monday, July 23 for a 36-hour period. For the week ending July 21, the Bering River District survey count was 9,900 versus a minimum anticipated goal of 14,400 sockeye salmon. During this survey, observational conditions for Bering River District systems were fair. Another survey of the Bering River District is anticipated to be flown late next week.

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT: The Copper River District will open at 7:00 am on Monday, July 23 for a 36-hour period. The cumulative sonar count to date is 1,251,203 fish whereas the minimum anticipated count to date is 620,933 fish. The preliminary harvest estimate from the 48-hour period that closed on Wednesday, July 18 is 36,200 sockeye salmon with 245 deliveries reported. This compares to an anticipated harvest 29,200 sockeye salmon for this period. The Gulkana Hatchery sockeye salmon harvest contribution from the fishing period that closed on July 11 was 46%. For the week ending July 21, the Copper River Delta survey count was 44,100 versus a minimum anticipated goal of 32,100 sockeye salmon. During this survey observational conditions on the Copper River Delta were fair. An aerial survey of the Copper River Delta is anticipated to be flown late next week.

MONTAGUE DISTRICT: The Port Chalmers Subdistrict will open for a 60-hour period beginning at 8:00 am on Monday, July 23 with an additional 84-hour period anticipated to begin at 8:00 am on Thursday, July 26. The drift gillnet fishing season closes in the Port Chalmers Subdistrict on July 30. The western boundary of the Port Chalmers Subdistrict is defined by lines from 60° 20.00' N., 147° 26.59' W. to 60° 14.75' N., 147° 35.35' W. to 60° 02.50' N., 147° 44.41' W. Regulatory closed waters and anadromous stream closures within the Port Chalmers Subdistrict will not be in effect until further notice. Harvest for the period that closed on Wednesday, July 18 was 26,100 chum salmon with 27 deliveries reported.

COGHILL DISTRICT: Waters of the Esther Subdistrict north of a latitude line at 60° 46.10' N, including the WNH THA and SHA, will be open to commercial DRIFT GILLNET AND PURSE SEINE harvest up to a line of buoys seaward of the barrier net for a 36-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, July 23. Anadromous stream closures within the WNH THA will not be in effect during this fishing period. Regulation 5 AAC 24.368(f) states that purse seine gear may be used in the Esther Subdistrict to harvest surplus chum salmon.

Waters of the Granite Bay Subdistrict will be open to commercial DRIFT GILLNET harvest for a 36-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, July 23.

Waters of the Coghill District within College Fiord, north of a latitude line at 61°00.45'N (Pt. Pakenham), will open to commercial DRIFT GILLNET AND PURSE SEINE harvest for a 14-hour period starting at 6:00 a.m. Monday, July 23. Effective from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Monday, July 23, regulatory closed waters pertaining to the Coghill River, as specified in 5 AAC 24.350(6)(B)), will not be in effect. Commercial fishing will not be permitted within the bed or channel of the Coghill River at any stage of the tide. **To maximize sockeye salmon commercial harvest potential and stay within the escapement goal range for Coghill River, purse seine gear is being allowed north of Pt. Pakenham.**

A total of 3,128 sockeye salmon were passed at the Coghill River weir yesterday, and approximately 3,000 sockeye salmon were observed below the weir this morning. Cumulative passage is 57,550 versus a minimum anticipated goal of 14,135 sockeye salmon for this date. Preliminary estimates of commercial harvest from the 24-hour period that closed on Friday, July 20 are 19,100 chum, 1,600 sockeye, and 6,400 pink salmon with 77 deliveries reported. Cumulative CPF harvest estimates to date are 2.07 million chum, 407,100 sockeye, and 83,900 pink salmon. ADF&G pink salmon otolith contribution estimates are now available for the Coghill District commercial fishing period that ended on July 18. Preliminary estimates result in a harvest composition of 44% hatchery and 56% wild stock pink salmon, with a wild stock harvest estimate of approximately 19,700 fish. Of the estimated 15,700 hatchery pink salmon harvested for this period, 100% originated from

VFDA's Solomon Gulch Hatchery. PWSAC's WNH SHA chum salmon estimates for July 21 are as follows: 50,000 to 70,000 inside the barrier net and 7,000 to 8,000 fish in the brood holding pond.

ESHAMY DISTRICT: The Eshamy District **within the Main Bay Subdistrict and MBH THA and SHA, excluding the AGZ**, will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a 48-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Monday, July 23. The AGZ up to a line of buoys in front of the barrier seine will open to SET GILLNET permit holders only during this fishing period. Harvest from the period that closed Tuesday, July 17 was 1,700 chum, 20,200 sockeye, and 8,600 pink salmon with 169 deliveries reported. ADF&G otolith contribution estimates are now available for the Eshamy District commercial fishing period that ended on July 17. Preliminary estimates result in a harvest composition of 24% hatchery and 76% wild stock pink salmon, with a wild stock harvest estimate of approximately 6,600 fish. Of the estimated 2,100 hatchery pink salmon harvested for this period, 100% originated from VFDA's Solomon Gulch Hatchery.

UNAKWIK DISTRICT: The Unakwik District is closed to commercial fishing.

SEINE FISHERIES: Aerial surveys of the Eastern, Northern, Unakwik, Coghill, Northwestern and Southeastern districts were flown on Monday and Tuesday. A partial survey of the Southwestern, Montague, Southeastern and Eastern districts was flown on Friday. Early season indicators of wild stock chum and pink salmon escapement in these districts are behind anticipated numbers and therefore do not support a wild stock fishery at this time. VFDA completed cost recovery fishing on Wednesday, July 11. VFDA estimates at least 200,000 pink salmon secured for broodstock near the Solomon Gulch Hatchery. VFDA's broodstock needs are approximately 346,000 pink salmon.

The preliminary CPF harvest estimate from the 14-hour period in the Eastern District on Friday, July 20 is 50 sockeye, 458,600 pink and 170 chum salmon with 141 deliveries reported. Cumulative pink salmon harvest in the Eastern District through July 20 is approximately 973,800 fish for cost recovery and approximately 8.2 million fish for common property fisheries. ADF&G sampling of CPF harvest from Jack Bay on July 20 resulted in an estimate of 67% female.

EASTERN DISTRICT: Waters in the Eastern District, north of a line from 61° 02.855'N., 146° 44.204'W. to 61° 02.373'N., 146° 43.407'W. to 61° 02.992'N., 146° 39.165'W., will open to commercial fishing for 14 hours on Sunday, July 22 beginning at 6:00 am. Waters of Port Valdez east of 146° 23.00' W. longitude will be closed to commercial fishing during this period. Regulatory closed waters north of a line from Potato Point to Entrance Point as described in 5AAC 24.350(3)(N), (O) and (P) **will be in effect until further notice**. Remaining regulatory closed waters (anadromous stream closures) north of a line from Potato Point to Entrance Point **will not be in effect** for this fishing period. Please refer to the ADF&G 2012-2015 Commercial Salmon Fishing Regulations for Prince William Sound booklet for regulations regarding commercial salmon fisheries in the Prince William Sound Area. This booklet is available in the Cordova ADF&G office and at the following web address:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/fishregulations/pdfs/commercial/PWSSalmon-2012-2015.pdf>

Area at the head of Port Valdez is being restricted at VFDA's recommendation to allow for protection of broodstock that appears to have keyed in on the Solomon Gulch Hatchery. Area in Valdez Arm is being restricted to allow for wild chum salmon escapement in Galena, Sawmill and Jack bays. **Based on wild chum salmon indicators in Valdez Arm and elsewhere in the Eastern District, it is not expected that additional area will be provided for fishing openings targeting VFDA pink salmon.**

NORTHERN DISTRICT: In the Perry Island Subdistrict, Hidden Bay, west of 148° 06.00 W. Long., will open to commercial fishing for 14 hours on Sunday, July 22 beginning at 6:00 am. Regulatory closed waters in Hidden Bay will not be in effect for this fishing period. This one-time opening is intended to target a potential build-up of enhanced chum salmon.

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT: On the east side of Knight Island, the waters of Marsha Bay, west of 147° 39.75' W. long., **will open to daily commercial fishing for 14 hour periods, from 6:00 am until 8:00 pm, on Monday, July 23, Tuesday July 24 and Wednesday, July 25.** Daily 14-hour fishing periods are being implemented to tie reporting into fishing periods taking place elsewhere in the Southwestern District. Anadromous stream closures within Marsha Bay will not be in effect until further notice. No harvest has been reported for recent fishing periods.

The waters of Sawmill Bay, including the AFK Hatchery Terminal Harvest Area (THA) and Special Harvest Area (SHA), inside of the newly defined THA line from 60° 03.66' N. lat., 147° 59.11' W. long. to 60° 02.77' N. lat., 148° 01.00' W. long. to 60° 02.76' N. lat., 148° 01.66' W. long. **will open to commercial fishing for 14 hour periods, from 6:00 am until 8:00 pm, on Sunday, July 22, Monday, July 23, Tuesday July 24 and Wednesday, July 25.** It is anticipated that the AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will then be closed to commercial fishing until further notice, as PWSAC expects to begin its pink salmon management and cost recovery program on Thursday, July 26. Daily 14-hour fishing periods are

being implemented to better track daily chum and pink salmon harvests. Anadromous stream closures within the AFK Hatchery THA and SHA will not be in effect until further notice. The harvest estimate from the 60-hour period that ended on Wednesday, July 18 is 1,700 sockeye, 10 coho, 25,400 pink and 3,900 chum salmon with 10 deliveries reported. There is no daily reporting available for the July 19 and July 20 fishing periods at this time. No new ADF&G otolith contribution estimates are available for recent Southwestern District commercial fishing periods at this time.

As a reminder, **all salmon that are harvested but not sold by commercial permit holders in Alaska waters must be reported on a fish ticket at the time of landing** (5AAC 39.130(c)(10)). Fish tickets have a “not sold/personal use” field to report these salmon.

The next scheduled PURSE SEINE salmon fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Sunday, July 22. The next scheduled GILLNET salmon fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Wednesday, July 25.

Permit holders are advised that unscheduled announcements based on current escapement data may occur at any time inseason either establishing an additional period or extending an open period.

Announcement recordings are available for **gillnet fisheries at 907-424-7535 and seine fisheries at 907-424-7345. In addition, announcement recordings are available in Anchorage at 267-2843.**

Additionally, announcements, inseason harvest data, and escapement data are available at the following web addresses:
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareacopperriver.main> (Copper River homepage) or
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareapws.main> (Prince William Sound homepage).

Unless otherwise specified, all openings are clock openings based on Alaska Daylight Time, which is based on Coordinated Universal Time and may be obtained by calling 303-499-7111.

The department encourages commercial permit holders to renew their licenses early and to check their CFEC vessel registration stickers to make sure that they are current.

The department also encourages permit holders to report observed violations to Wildlife Safeguard at 800-478-3377. Reports are anonymous and cash rewards may be paid for successful prosecution of violations.

PWS commercial fishers are reminded that area fisheries often necessitate fishing in close proximity to marine mammals. Under the Marine Mammals Protection Act (MMPA), the PWS drift gillnet fishery is classified as a Category II fishery. Participants in Category I and II fisheries must be registered in the Marine Mammal Avoidance Program (MMAP) to be authorized for lawful incidental, but not intentional, marine mammal takes during fishing. However, this authorization explicitly does **not** exempt holders of commercial fishing permits from the MMPA prohibition on takes of marine mammals listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. As a participant in the PWS drift gillnet fishery you are automatically registered in the Marine Mammal Authorization Program (MMAP) by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). As a participant in a Category II fishery, you must:

- Maintain an MMAP Authorization Certificate, or a photocopy, on board the vessel while engaging in any of the fisheries identified on the reverse side of the certificate. For non-vessel or set net fisheries, the enclosed Certificate, or a photocopy, must be in the possession of the permit holder during fishing operations. This Certificate, in combination with a current, valid state or Federal fishing permit, will serve as your authorization to incidentally take non-endangered or non-threatened marine mammals in the course of commercial fishing operations.
- Report all injuries and mortalities of marine mammals within 48 hours of returning from the trip during which these takes occurred using the MMAP Mortality/Injury Reporting Form (visit http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/interactions/mmap_reporting_form.pdf for a copy).
- If so requested, take an observer aboard your vessel.

Purse seine and set gillnet gear are classified as a category III fisheries under the MMPA. Category III fishery participants are automatically exempted from the incidental take prohibition in the MMPA. Therefore, you do not need to maintain the MMAP certificate aboard your vessel, but must report any incidental takes of marine mammals within 48 hours of the incident or your return to port. Such reports must be made on the Marine Mammals Authorization Program Mortality/Injury Reporting Form.

Because some marine mammals are also listed under the Endangered Species Act, incidental takes are also regulated under that act and are not authorized. **All MMPA category fisheries are liable for incidentally taking ESA listed species.**

Please reference http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/esa_factsheet.pdf for a list of marine mammals currently listed under the ESA (you should periodically check with the National Marine Fisheries Service for any changes in listed species). Under the ESA, take means to “harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct.” 16U.S.C. 1532(19); and harass means an “intentional or negligent act or omission which creates the likelihood of injury to the wildlife by annoying it to such an extent as to significantly disrupt normal behavioral patterns which include, but are not limited to, breeding, feeding, or sheltering.” (50 C.F.R. 17.3).

To reduce the possibility of incidentally taking an ESA listed species and its associated liability ADF&G recommends that:

- Fishermen participating in area fisheries remain vigilant in monitoring gear when marine mammals may be present.
- Fishermen use avoidance measures (e.g., not fishing or relocating fishing activities when marine mammals are present or likely to be present) to minimize interactions with marine mammals.
- Avoid fishing in areas where marine mammals are likely to be present at night or when visibility or weather conditions make it difficult to spot marine mammals.

For further questions concerning marine mammal regulations call NMFS at 907-271-5006.